



Spinal Connection

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Spinal Connection is an official publication of the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission. The Commission was established by Act 311 of 1975. On July 1, 2019, the Commission became a public health program under the Arkansas Department of Health as initiated by the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019 (Act 910).

From the Director ~ Terra Patrom

Spring Forward to Better Health - Physically & Mentally!

As I write this article, we 'SPRING FORWARD' to Daylight Saving Time. I thought this would be a good time to remind everyone about a healthier YOU! The sun is out more, which helps you feel rejuvenated from all the darkness that 'FALL BACK' brought. I bring this as a topic of interest for other reasons. When COVID hit, it created a moment of fear, concern, and enlightenment to the way of the HERMIT. Way too many people are still in this mode of darkness, and it concerns me.

Some food for thought. Getting out is good for the soul. Even if it's to soak up a little sunshine and to lighten the mood. Go out and sit on your porch or patio and breathe some fresh air. Better yet, smell the flowers, listen to the birds chirping and bees buzzing.

Remember you are alive and rejuvenate your inner being. Find that something that will get you back to being and doing your normal day to day task of living in the open.

You can do so and still be safe. When you plan to be around others, you can still wear a mask or stay out in the open, especially, when it's nice outside. I won't pretend like it hasn't rained a WHOLE lot these past few months. You get the point.

If you're looking for a way to get active again, the Kelly Brush Foundation's Active Project is a great way to learn about dozens of adaptive sports, discover local sports programs, and find and

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Donations

ASCC accepts tax-deductible donations.

Send your donation to:

AR Spinal Cord Commission
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Suite 108
Little Rock, AR 72204

Trauma Rehab Call Center

1-855-767-6983
(FREE 24/7 Access)
Help & Information
for Arkansans with Spinal
Cord Injury & Healthcare
Providers

Call or Text 9-8-8

The national suicide and mental health crisis lifeline is live.

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connect with peers. For more information, go to <https://activeproject.kellybrushfoundation.org/>.

They also have grants for adaptive sports equipment every Spring and Fall. These grants provide up to \$3500 for individuals with paralysis caused by a spinal cord injury (examples - due to a fall, motor vehicle accidents, diving) with equipment to help you stay active and healthy. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, go to: <https://kellybrushfoundation.org/theactivefund/>.

My goal and hope for everyone is to 'Spring Forward' to a Physically and Mentally healthier you!



Resource Reminder

iCAN is the Arkansas statewide Assistive Technology program designed to make technology available and accessible for



everyone who needs it. Assistive technology (AT) is any kind of device or tool that helps people live, learn, work, and communicate more independently. Visit <https://ar-ican.org/> or call 501-666-8868 or 1-800-828-2799. Also, on Facebook, at fb.me/ICANArkansas.

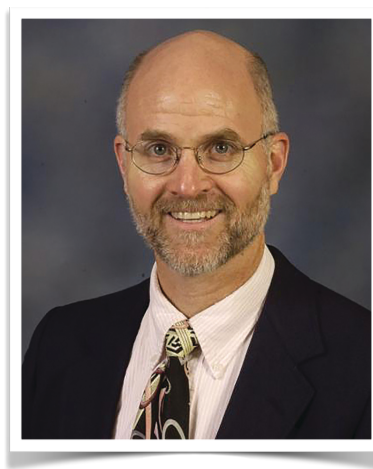
The Telecommunication Access Program (TAP) provides specialized telecommunication equipment to eligible



Arkansans who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or who have a speech, visual, mobility, or intellectual impairment. TAP strives to remove telecommunication barriers through the delivery of adaptive communication technology. Visit <https://arktap.org/> or call 501-686-9693 or 1-800-981-4463. Also, on Facebook, at fb.me/arktap1.

Spasticity Management

Spasticity is an involuntary reflex that can occur spontaneously but usually occurs with movement. Because it is velocity dependent, it is stronger as the speed of your movements increase, so if you move slowly and take your time with transfers you can decrease the strength of your spasms. Conversely, sudden movements or sudden loud noises can set off your spasms and impair your balance. A good stretching program will keep your muscles loose and the muscle spindles (special monitoring muscle fibers which measure and control the tone in your muscles) more lax. A stretched out, relaxed muscle is less sensitive to sudden movements and can minimize spasticity. Therefore, if you stretch several times a day by getting in your standing frame, or having your aide or family stretch your legs and trunk, this will improve your spasms and in the long run also prevent contractures.



Thomas Kiser, MD

Medication can also help decrease spasticity:

1. Baclofen is a medication that is frequently used to manage spasticity in spinal cord injury patients because it is effective and safe. It takes effect in 20-30 minutes and lasts for about 6 hours. It is cleared by the liver and the main side effect is drowsiness. The dose can be slowly increased to allow you to acclimate to the drowsiness. Baclofen should not be stopped suddenly, but tapered down slowly to prevent withdrawal issues, which can include hallucinations, seizures and sudden worsening of spasticity. If you are not able to tolerate oral baclofen, the baclofen can be delivered via a catheter to the spinal fluid around your spinal cord. This is called an intrathecal baclofen pump and is 90-95% effective in most patients with a spinal cord injury. It is most effective in managing spasticity in the trunk and legs but less effective for spasticity in the arms.
2. Tizanidine works by slowing down your nervous system's response to movement. It too is cleared by the liver and is sedating. It takes effect in about 30 minutes and lasts for 6-8 hours. I often start this medication at night and add a daytime dose once the nighttime dose is tolerated well. It can be taken three to four times a day. Since its mechanism of action is different from baclofen, it can be used with baclofen to improve spasticity. It can cause heart rhythm problems if taken with either ciprofloxacin or levofloxacin, which are antibiotics often used to treat bladder infections. So if you are on tizanidine ask your treating physician to use a different antibiotic or stop taking

tizanidine while you are on the antibiotic. There are no withdrawal symptoms with stopping tizanidine.

3. Dantrium works at the muscle level by decreasing the release of calcium into the muscle and thereby decreasing the strength of the muscle response to nerve stimulation. It also takes about 30 minutes to take effect and lasts 6-8 hours. Dantrium can be used 3 to 4 times a day and is less sedating than baclofen and tizanidine, but it can make the muscle weaker and so should be used at the lowest effective dose. Dantrium does increase the risk of liver failure, so if you are on this medication you should have your liver enzymes monitored closely. I like to assess them at least every 6 months. There are no withdrawal concerns with Dantrium.
4. Botulinum toxin is given via a muscle injection, which can locally decrease nerve reaction to spasticity by binding to the nerves in the muscle, but is not good for generalized spasticity since it must be injected into each muscle individually. It is used by urology to decrease bladder spasms by injecting the bladder muscle.
5. Muscle relaxants, such as methocarbamol, metaxalone, cyclobenzaprine, and carisoprodol can also decrease muscle spasms. They work to relax muscles by depressing the central nervous system and making you drowsy. As a class of drugs, they are not very potent in suppressing spasticity associated with spinal cord injury.

Our sincere condolences to the friends and family of...

Jerry L. Woods 01/10/22
Garlan L. Foote 03/18/22
Charles T. Mayo 04/09/22
Ricky Paris 06/09/22
Dale McCafferty 07/07/22
Aubrey Simmons 08/23/22
Lillie M. Wright 10/14/22
Edna E. Wright 11/04/22
Jan J. Williams 11/10/22
Joseph Hawkins 11/20/22
James A. Thomas 11/24/22
Erbie Dearen 12/07/22
June T. Eudy 12/19/22
Howard D. Miller 01/03/23
Tony L. Sides 01/07/23
Charles S. Nichols 01/18/23
Pamela K. Miller 01/21/23
Clement H. Whistle 02/07/23
Clyde Nelson 02/23/23

Spasticity after a spinal cord injury is variable and can be affected by many aspects of your health. If your bladder is full or you have a bladder infection, your spasticity can increase. If your bowel program is not going well and you are constipated, your spasticity can increase. Any pain below the spinal cord injury or poor posture in your wheelchair or a pressure sore can cause your spasticity to increase. To manage your spasticity well you need to manage your general health well : stay on top of your bowel and bladder programs and make sure your skin and wheelchair posture is the best it can be.

Spasticity is manageable. Moving slowly, stretching daily, managing your bowel, bladder and skin well, using appropriate oral medication, and using botulinum toxin injections or an intrathecal baclofen pump if needed are all effective, proven strategies.



SPINALpedia serves the needs of thousands of individuals and families affected by a spinal cord injury (SCI) from all over the world. We are here to empower our community through our shared SCI knowledge, voices, and stories.

The Problem

Too many in the SCI community struggle to find relevant information and similarly situated people to learn from. The lack of knowing what's possible and not having someone to connect with leads to depression and feeling alone. Most are unaware of their full potential to live active post-injury lifestyles outside of the comforting walls of their home.

Our Community

Learning from others that have been down a similar road creates instant connections and inspires sharing of information. Our vast database of SCI content grows as our community grows. Content on our site is uploaded by our community for our community. We believe that together we are united and that together we are stronger.

Our Solution

To provide an online platform where “Everything Spinal Cord” can be easily searchable by those in need and shared by those looking to give back. SPINALpedia creates an empowering atmosphere where everyone speaks spinal cord and those dominating life from a wheelchair can be heard.

<https://spinalpedia.com>





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Find us on

Don't forget to like and follow us on Facebook at [**fb.me/arspinalcord**](https://fb.me/arspinalcord)

We post and share relevant and current information, such as:

- ▶ Spinal Connection Newsletter
- ▶ Job Openings
- ▶ Upcoming Events
- ▶ Information Shared from Vendors
- ▶ Accessible Parking Laws
- ▶ Spinal Disorders Camp
- ▶ Grants, Scholarships, & Fundraisers
- ▶ ASCC Conferences
- ▶ Holiday Closures
- ▶ Support Group Meetings
- ▶ Voting Information
- ▶ Urgent Information